

Superintendent's Monthly Report – August 2015

Lewiston Public Schools

Note: I delayed the release of my August 2015 Monthly Report to capture some opening day information.

First Student Day

School started Wednesday, September 2nd for grades k-9 and Thursday, September 3rd, for grades 10-12. Tuesday, September 8th is the first day for preK. Each new school year I walk through all our schools, and I was particularly impressed this year with the condition of our facilities and excitement and engagement on the part of teachers and students alike. Even with all our challenges (see one below), I am looking forward to a great year for Lewiston Public Schools.

School Enrollment

While our kindergarten enrollment did drop slightly from last year as forecasted, we have either retained a higher percentage of students moving up the grades or experienced a material increase in student numbers. Overall, our student numbers have grown from 5,300 a year ago to 5,500 presently. Fortunately, over the last two weeks the School Committee has authorized the addition of 6 additional classroom teachers, and we had an additional 3 classroom teachers in the original budget. These additional classrooms are primarily in the lower grades and have reduced overall class sizes in kindergarten to less than 20 per room, but overall we are just barely keeping pace with the enrollment increase. Furthermore, we are only able to find classroom space through less than ideal means of using a portable, combining resource and ELL rooms and eliminating computer labs or teacher lounges.

The 200-student increase is double the forecast done in last winter's demography study of Lewiston schools and points to the distinct possibility that we will need to add portable or modular elementary classrooms before the new elementary school is likely opened in September 2019. I expect to be revisiting and presenting to the School Committee a plan, first explored two years ago, that would add 6-8 classrooms at Farwell. As much as it may seem undesirable, Farwell may be the best expansion choice given that the other elementary schools are already sufficiently large (Montello is now over 800 students!) or are due for replacement.

Update on New Elementary School

The Site Selection Subcommittee of the Building Committee unanimously recommended that the new elementary school be located in Franklin Pasture, and this recommendation was approved by the School Committee at its August 17th meeting. With this approval, we will now be submitting a formal site application to the Department of Education in early October. This will be followed by a public site tour, meeting and straw poll on October 21st. Final site approval is slated for the November Maine State Board of Education meeting. Once the site is approved, we will be moving quickly to design both the play field relocation and the new school itself. Tentative key dates for this process include the straw poll on March 23rd, an April Board of Education meeting and a June 7th public referendum vote.

The Building Committee is now meeting regularly on the design, and information on this work as well as the site selection is now available from the link at www.lewistonpublicschools.org or directly at <https://sites.google.com/a/lewistonpublicschools.org/lewiston-s-new-elementary-school/?pli=1>. Also, I am presently in negotiations with the Portland Diocese for the purchase of Drouin Field and hope to have an agreement for School Committee approval prior to the end of September.

Honoring Parents Requests

As much as possible I like to honor requests from parents for their children to attend a Lewiston elementary school outside their home district. To-date for this school year we (Sue Turgeon does the work!) have received 500 requests and approved all but 32. The denials were almost invariably due to unduly large class sizes in the requested school and grade. Another 100 requests are expected to be processed over the school year. In addition, I and other area superintendents have approved over 150 superintendents' agreements to allow either non-Lewiston students to attend our schools or Lewiston students to attend non-Lewiston schools.

Viability of 1/2 –day Program beginning September 2016

The School Committee has expressed support for a ½-day of system-wide professional development beginning September 2016 provided that we are able to offer alternative programming for Lewiston students. This might, for example, mean that every Wednesday formal school ends right after lunch and teachers, having no further student responsibilities, engage in professional development activities for the remainder of the school day. I recently met with some LPS staff involved in afterschool programming and major community organizations also involved in afterschool programming. Some of the takeaways from this meeting include:

- Teachers and administrators cannot fully engage in PD activities if there is any chance that they might be called to deal with dismissal, discipline issues or any other student responsibilities.
- Our educational technicians, while very capable, are not in a position to run afterschool programming without appropriate supervision. Such supervision is typically provided by teachers, and over 50% of the staffing of our present afterschool programming are teachers.
- Student dismissal is a big challenge and must involve teachers if it involves most of the student body.
- Our larger community partners (Girls and Boys Club, YMCA, YWCA, Tree Street and Lewiston Recreation) have a total afternoon capacity of approximately 500 students. While the YMCA does run a program at Geiger for roughly 50 students, these organizations also generally like to operate programs at their own facilities.
- There will always be liability issues for Lewiston Public Schools unless the parents register their students directly with the community partner organizations.

I am compiling further information, and there will be a follow-up report and presentation made to the School Committee this fall.

Tweets and Facebook Entries - Follow me on Twitter @LewistonSuper or on Facebook at *Lewiston Public Schools Superintendent*.

Date	Tweet
8/13/15	Educators- Visit the ShareCenter for materials, Tue/Wed, 1-6, 1st/2nd Sat each month. 33 Industry Ave, Auburn 333-6671
8/18/15	Congratulations to the 15 students who graduated tonight from LHS. Their hard work is a great example for all.
8/28/15	ATTENTION FAMILIES WITH 4TH GRADERS-You have free admission to all national parks and federal lands this school year! http://www.nationalparks.gov/look/ekiap-signup
8/31/15	Thank you Senator Angus King for your inspirational talk to Lewiston educators. We are ready for the new school year!
9/1/15	The Lewiston Education Assoc announces 10/14 Harvest Dinner fundraiser and 2015-16 grant cycle timeline for teachers. http://lewistoneducationfund.org/
9/1/15	Mayor McDonald will nominate ZamZam Mohamud to fill open School Committee slot until new member is elected.

